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ABSTRACT

A March 1980 statewide survey of the membership of the Ohio Modern Language Teachers Association asked their opinion of the importance and achievability of specific language competencies being considered for statewide application in high school college preparatory programs. The findings from 241 secondary and college-level teacher responses showed substantial support for the competency criteria, with most indicating that they thought the criteria designated for two years of study were important for all students and those designated for three or more years of study were important for college-bound students. There was somewhat less agreement about the achievability of competencies, although responses reflected the belief that the higher the order of skill, the more capable the student had to be to achieve it. Only one skill, oral discussion of the main features of literature, was felt by more than 10% to be inappropriate, and three others were felt to be unachievable as described by a similar percentage. The greatest divergence in opinion was found in the ways in which the foreign language program should encourage acquaintance with the target language's culture. While there was broad general agreement on the importance of study abroad, participation in foreign exchange programs and local ethnic activities, and attendance or sponsorship of language fairs, a significant percentage of respondents either did not respond to these items or felt they were not applicable or were unachievable as described. It is felt that while the survey is an important step in high school-college articulation efforts for foreign language instruction, its results must be interpreted so as to allow flexibility in local program planning and implementation. (MSE)

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THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE ARTICULATION TASK FORCE SURVEY: A REPORT

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Ohio foreign language educators and their state professional associations have long been concerned about articulation between secondary school and collegiate-level language programs. During the 1970's, however, professional attention largely shifted to other concerns, as college admission and degree requirements were abolished and secondary school teachers sought other means to attract students to language study. Now in the 1980's, Ohio universities are once again establishing admission requirements that include foreign language, and high school teachers are asking: What will be expected of my students when they reach college?

Background

In September 1980, the Ohio Board of Regents and the State Board of Education jointly appointed a 15-member Advisory Commission on Articulation between Secondary Education and Ohio Colleges. The Commission, composed of representatives from both secondary and higher education levels, was charged with the task of developing a college preparatory curriculum that would clearly define expectations for students entering college and, when followed, would reduce the need for remedial course work at the collegiate level.

The Commission's report, issued in April 1981, recommended a college preparatory curriculum consisting of four units of English and a minimum of three units of mathematics (one of them to be taken in the senior year), supplemented by three units of social studies, three units of science, and three units of foreign language. Private and state-assisted four-year institutions of higher learning were urged to require that students applying for admission on an unconditional basis must have successfully completed the proposed preparatory curriculum. Other recommendations, together with their related implementation strategies, focused on teacher preservice and inservice education and on communication within the educational community as well as with students and their parents. In accordance with the report's final recommendation, a joint Advisory Council for College Preparatory Education was appointed to monitor the implementation of the Commission's recommendations and to evaluate their success.

Reactions to the recommended college preparatory curriculum were generally positive. The proposed three units of foreign language, however, proved to be the center of some controversy throughout the state. Some people felt that three years of language study were excessive as a general requirement, while others advocated the exclusion of foreign language altogether from the college preparatory curriculum. As a compromise measure, the

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Advisory Council reduced the recommended foreign language requirement to two units, and the amended college preparatory curriculum was endorsed by resolutions of both the Board of Regents and the State Board of Education.

As part of the Commission's work, two appointed task forces formulated recommendations for college preparatory programs in English and mathematics. These recommendations were included as an appendix in the Commission's report. Subsequently, similar task forces were appointed for science, social studies, and foreign language. Appointed to the foreign language task force were seven collegiate-level people: Reed Anderson, Miami University; Martha Knorre, University of Cincinnati; Dr. Helmut Kremling, Ohio Wesleyan University; Bethany Oberst, Cleveland State University; Charles Richardson, Ohio University; Helen Shepard, Lorain County Community College; and Yvonne Stebbins, Sinclair Community College. Elaine Hairston, Director of Special Programs, Ohio Board of Regents, served as Chairperson.

The foreign language task force departed significantly from the approach taken by the other task forces. Instead of emphasizing content, i.e., what should be covered, they defined the foreign language college preparatory program in terms of expected learning outcomes, i.e., what students should be able to do in the areas of grammar and syntax, vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, writing, and culture at the end of two years and three or more years, respectively, of language study. (The competency criteria were based on the "Proposed Foreign Language Curriculum Guide for the State of Ohio," prepared by Richard and Mary Danner of Ohio University for the Articulation and Curriculum Committee of the Ohio Modern Language Teachers Association.) The draft of the task force report containing these competency criteria was then reviewed and edited by six secondary-level people and expanded to include classical languages. Irene Bandy, Assistant Superintendent, Ohio Department of Education, served as Chairperson of the secondary group. Other members were Robert Ballinger, Worthington High School; John Durden, Akron City Schools; Nancy Humbach, Finneytown High School, Cincinnati; Carolyn Ummel, Valley View High School, Germantown; Marion Walters, DeVilbiss High School, Toledo; and Carolyn White, Northland High School, Columbus.

The Survey

In March 1980, the Ohio Modern Language Teachers Association distributed the foreign language articulation task force report to its 1200 members in the form of a survey questionnaire. Respondents were asked to indicate, first, whether they considered each competency statement (1) very important, (2) important for college-bound students, or (3) not important. They were then asked to indicate whether they considered each competency statement (1) not applicable, (2) achievable by all students who do

passing work, (3) achievable by most A, B, and C students, (4) achievable by only the best students, or (5) not achievable as described. A total of 241 survey questionnaires -- 213 from secondary-level respondents and 28 from collegiate-level respondents -- were returned by OMLTA members.

The three tables on the following pages present the results of the modern language portion of the survey. The first four columns of figures show the percentages of respondents selecting each degree of importance for the various competency statements. The remaining six columns show percentages of respondents selecting each degree of achievability. For each competency statement, the first four figures should total 100 percent, and the remaining six figures should total 100 percent.

In general, respondents registered a high level of support for the competency criteria. For the most part, very large percentages of them felt the skills specified for two years of study were important for all students. At the same time, there was some tendency to relate the skills designated for three or more years of study to college-bound students. Only three or four skill statements were rated unimportant by more than a negligible percentage of respondents.

There was somewhat less agreement with regard to achievability of competencies. As might be expected, though, percentages of responses generally reflected the belief that the higher the order of skill, the more capable the student had to be to achieve it. Only one skill -- oral discussion of main features of literary works -- was felt by more than 10 percent to be not applicable, and three others were judged by a similar percentage to be unachievable as described.

The greatest divergence of opinion was registered in regard to part C of the Culture section. This part consisted, not of learner competency statements, but rather ways in which the foreign language program should encourage acquaintance with the foreign culture. While there was broad general agreement on the importance of study abroad, participation in foreign exchange programs and local ethnic activities, and attendance at or sponsorship of language fairs, a significant percentage of the respondents either did not respond to these items, or felt that such activities were not applicable or else unachievable as described.

Toward Better Articulation

Articulation in education is often structured according to what could be termed the "Mosaic" model. Like the tablets of the law that Moses brought down from the mountain, it involves expectations formulated at a higher level as to what people at a lower level should be doing -- in this case, producing in terms of

O M L T A ARTICULATION QUESTIONNAIRE

PERCENTAGES OF RESPONSE

Very important for all students Important for college-bound students Not important No response				Not applicable Achievable by all students who do passing work Achievable by most A, B, and C students Only my best students can achieve this Not achievable as described No response						N = 241 213 secondary 28 college level
75	19	1	1	0	39	54	5	1	1	MODERN LANGUAGES Grammar and Syntax: A. Following two years of study, the student: - Understands and can use main elements of grammar and syntax as found in any widely adopted introductory foreign language text series. - Uses simple grammatical structures for oral and written communication. - Recognizes more complex grammatical constructions when listening and reading. B. Following three or more years of study, the student: - Maintains practice and can use with ease the elements of grammar and syntax introduced throughout his or her years of language study. Vocabulary A. Following two years of study, the student: - Has active control (speaking and writing) of a minimum vocabulary of approximately 1500-2000 terms which are representative of those found in the glossary of any widely adopted foreign language textbook series. - Has receptive (listening and reading) control of a minimum vocabulary of approximately 2500-3000 terms. - Infers meaning of new words belonging to known word families. B. Following three or more years of study, the student: - Has acquired additional vocabulary from a variety of sources (e.g. newspapers, literary texts, magazines, radio broadcasts, movies, and so on). Listening A. Following two years of study, the student: - Comprehends simple utterances spoken at a moderate tempo. - Recognizes differences between formal and familiar forms of address. - Distinguishes questions from statements in all forms commonly used by speakers of the foreign language. - Infers the meaning of new words from context. - Comprehends textbook-related materials presented at a normal tempo. - Understands simple anecdotes, narrative and dramatic passages spoken at a moderate tempo.
92	8	0	0	0	53	42	2	0	3	
31	63	4	1	1	8	40	47	0	4	
67	31	0	2	3	13	54	25	3	2	
73	25	0	2	0	29	49	16	4	2	
61	37	0	2	1	18	52	24	3	2	
58	42	0	0	0	16	50	31	1	2	
49	43	5	3	6	22	36	21	14	1	
94	6	0	0	0	64	33	27	1	0	
79	19	1	1	0	68	31	1	0	0	
85	14	0	1	0	60	34	4	1	1	
67	33	0	0	0	15	52	32	0	1	
74	23	1	2	1	35	54	8	1	1	
50	46	2	2	1	12	52	35	3	2	

Very important for all students				Important for college-bound students				Not important				No response				Not applicable				Achievable by all students who do passing work				Achievable by most A, B, and C students				Only my best students can achieve this				Not achievable as described				No response																						
75	23	2	0	1	38	46	11	0	2	3	35	52	8	2	0	0	55	41	3	0	1	6	12	48	24	5	5	2	12	47	32	4	3	5	19	47	14	3	2	2	17	45	31	2	3													
65	30	4	1	3	26	48	19	1	1	4	30	50	13	1	2	5	34	42	15	2	2	4	13	35	40	5	3	5	6	20	37	28	7	2	0	66	23	6	3	2	0	76	15	6	1	2	0	55	24	11	5	5	6	20	37	28	7	2
87	12	0	1	0	55	41	3	0	1	0	76	15	6	1	2	0	55	24	11	5	5	6	20	37	28	7	2	10	26	23	15	20	6	20	44	10	5	11	10	9	52	10	4	18	7	20	44	10	5	11	10							
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41	51	5	3	2	12	47	32	4	3	4	13	35	40	5	3	5	6	20	37	28	7	2	10	26	23	15	20	6	15	23	28	17	10	7	20	44	10	5	11	10	9	52	10	4	18	7	20	44	10	5	11	10						
54	35	7	4	5	19	47	14	3	2	4	13	35	40	5	3	5	6	20	37	28	7	2	10	26	23	15	20	6	15	23	28	17	10	7	20	44	10	5	11	10	9	52	10	4	18	7	20	44	10	5	11	10						
54	41	2	3	2	17	45	31	2	3	4	13	35	40	5	3	5	6	20	37	28	7	2	10	26	23	15	20	6	15	23	28	17	10	7	20	44	10	5	11	10	9	52	10	4	18	7	20	44	10	5	11	10						
73	24	1	2	5	26	48	19	1	1	4	30	50	13	1	2	5	34	42	15	2	2	4	13	35	40	5	3	5	6	20	37	28	7	2	0	66	23	6	3	2	0	76	15	6	1	2	0	55	24	11	5	5	6	20	37	28	7	2
67	30	1	2	4	30	50	13	1	2	4	30	50	13	1	2	5	34	42	15	2	2	4	13	35	40	5	3	5	6	20	37	28	7	2	0	66	23	6	3	2	0	76	15	6	1	2	0	55	24	11	5	5	6	20	37	28	7	2
60	33	3	4	5	34	42	15	2	2	4	13	35	40	5	3	5	6	20	37	28	7	2	10	26	23	15	20	6	15	23	28	17	10	7	20	44	10	5	11	10	9	52	10	4	18	7	20	44	10	5	11	10						
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39	55	4	2	5	6	32	48	7	2	4	13	35	40	5	3	5	6	20	37	28	7	2	10	26	23	15	20	6	15	23	28	17	10	7	20	44	10	5	11	10	9	52	10	4	18	7	20	44	10	5	11	10						
82	16	0	2	0	66	23	6	3	2	0	76	15	6	1	2	0	55	24	11	5	5	6	20	37	28	7	2	10	26	23	15	20	6	20	44	10	5	11	10	9	52	10	4	18	7	20	44	10	5	11	10							
88	10	0	2	0	76	15	6	1	2	0	76	15	6	1	2	0	55	24	11	5	5	6	20	37	28	7	2	10	26	23	15	20	6	20	44	10	5	11	10	9	52	10	4	18	7	20	44	10	5	11	10							
83	12	0	5	0	55	24	11	5	5	6	20	37	28	7	2	0	55	24	11	5	5	6	20	37	28	7	2	10	26	23	15	20	6	20	44	10	5	11	10	9	52	10	4	18	7	20	44	10	5	11	10							
58	37	1	4	6	20	37	28	7	2	4	13	35	40	5	3	5	6	20	37	28	7	2	10	26	23	15	20	6	15	23	28	17	10	7	20	44	10	5	11	10	9	52	10	4	18	7	20	44	10	5	11	10						
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62	20	12	6	20	44	10	5	11	10	4	13	35	40	5	3	5	6	20	37	28	7	2	10	26	23	15	20	6	15	23	28	17	10	7	20	44	10	5	11	10	9	52	10	4	18	7	20	44	10	5	11	10						
59	23	11	7	9	52	10	4	18	7	4	13	35	40	5	3	5	6	20	37	28	7	2	10	26	23	15	20	6	15	23	28	17	10	7	20	44	10	5	11	10	9	52	10	4	18	7	20	44	10	5	11	10						

Writing

A. Following two years of study, the student:

- Uses diacritical marks, spells, capitalizes, and punctuates correctly;
- Reproduces with accuracy dictated materials from textbooks;
- Answers simple questions in writing;
- Rewrites dialogue using indirect discourse;
- Summarizes brief expository passages;
- Writes simple personal letters;
- Composes short paragraphs using a variety of vocabulary and syntactical patterns.

B. Following three years or more of study, the student:

- Writes with correct basic grammar and syntax;
- Composes short answers to essay questions;
- Composes brief dialogues and narratives;
- Expresses opinions on a wide range of topics;
- Organizes ideas well within paragraphs and in whole compositions.

Culture

A. Following two years of study, the student:

- Recognizes and can compare basic cultural similarities and differences between countries in which the language is spoken and the United States;
- Recognizes that people throughout the world are individuals;
- Reflects an objective view of foreign culture.

B. Following three or more years of study, the student:

- Demonstrates, in foreign language, knowledge of the foreign culture (geographical, social, political, religious, artistic, and economic aspects).

C. The foreign language program should encourage acquaintance with the foreign culture in ways such as:

- Recommending and facilitating study abroad in a country or countries where the language being studied is spoken;
- Encouraging participation in foreign exchange programs;
- Participating in local ethnic activities;
- Attending and/or sponsoring language fairs.

student learning. College teachers have expectations of high school teachers, who in turn have expectations of junior high or middle school teachers, and so on down the line.

As long as these expectations regarding student learning are realistic, based on a full knowledge of learning conditions and learner characteristics at lower levels, there is generally no serious problem. All too often, however, those who formulate expectations or standards at one level have unrealistic notions about what can be reasonably accomplished at a lower level. In such situations, communication is usually one-way, from top to bottom, and those upon whom the expectations are levied have little or no opportunity to make the constraints and limitations they labor under known to those above. More often than not, hostility and mutual recrimination are the result.

The report of the foreign language articulation task force represents a significant step toward better articulation between secondary and collegiate-level modern language programs in Ohio. Certainly one of its major strengths is its specification of desired learning outcomes in terms of student skills or competencies instead of the traditional inventory of grammar and culture topics to be "covered" with no operational definition of what constitutes student learning.

If, however, the Ohio articulation document is regarded as the tablet of the law, to be obeyed to the letter and without question, then the cause of articulation is likely to be seriously set back rather than advanced. More appropriately, the document should provide structure and direction to language programs. In this regard, it should be flexible enough in its interpretation to accommodate the wide diversity of local conditions and resources as well as the considerable range of individual student needs and abilities that exist throughout the state. And, of equal importance, it should provide a basis for two-way communication between and among language teachers at all levels of instruction.

In judging what is reasonable to expect in terms of secondary school language learning, it should be remembered that one unit (i.e., one year) of high school study, as defined by state minimum standards, consists of 120 scheduled hours of instruction. That does not take into account time lost for pep rallies, drama and athletic practice, snow days, senior week, assemblies, announcements, and the countless other things that reduce secondary school instructional time. By comparison, as Gerard Ervin (1) documents from his personal experience as an instructor, the U.S. government language schools count on about 600 hours for learners of French and Spanish to attain a "3" rating, or minimal functional proficiency level, on the Foreign Service Institute scale. This is accomplished with highly motivated adult learners

(not 14 to 16 year olds), and with four or five students to a class (not 35!). Additionally, one hour of instruction is alternated with one hour of intensive practice conducted by a trained native drillmaster throughout an eight-hour day, plus two to four hours homework a night and several weekends of total immersion in the target language during the course. Equivalent proficiency in German requires 900 hours; in an eastern European language, 1200 hours; and, in a language like Chinese, Japanese, or Arabic, it takes two years under the above conditions, the second year spent in the foreign country.

Ultimately, as Barbara Snyder (2) emphasizes, articulation involves receiving students at whatever levels of achievement they may be, and then taking each one as far as he or she is able to go in a given course. The articulation document can give structure and direction to our efforts to prepare students for college. But in this process, let us constantly bear in mind the invaluable lessons we as a profession learned in the 1970's, so that in our college preparatory fervor we never lose sight of the individual student. Above all, let us never stop talking to each other across the various levels at which we teach.

Notes

- 1 Gerard Ervin, Personal communication.
 - 2 Barbara Snyder, NEH Language Project Panel, Ohio University Lancaster Campus, Lancaster, Ohio, February 22, 1984.
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